

European Identity Matrix of Georgia<sup>1</sup>  
საქართველოს ევროპული იდენტობის მატრიცა

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Abstract

One of the important topics in the modern Georgian academic discourse is the issue of the European identity of Georgia, the scientific research and correct perception of which is very important for the European future of the Georgian state.

The article discusses the genesis of European and Georgian identities, their markers, cause and effect relationships.

According to the paper, the European identity matrix of Georgia is based on historical, political, economic, social and cultural characteristics, according to which Georgia is considered a part of European civilization.

The research will help Georgian and foreign scientists to perceive the European identity of Georgia better, which will be a novelty for Georgian and European historiography.

**Keywords:** Europe; Georgia; European Identities; Georgian Identities; European Civilization; Georgian-European identities; Georgian Identities Markers.

ემზარ ფაჟავა

სოციალურ მეცნიერებათა დოქტორი. საქართველოს ტექნიკური  
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აბსტრაქტი

თანამედროვე ქართულ აკადემიურ დისკურსში ერთ-ერთი მნიშვნელოვანი თემა საქართველოს ევროპული იდენტობის საკითხია, რომლის მეცნიერული კვლევა და სწორი პერცეფცია ძალიან მნიშვნელოვანია ქართული სახელმწიფოს ევროპული მომავლისთვის.

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სტატიაში განხილულია ევროპული და ქართული იდენტობების გენეზისი, მათი მახასიათებლები, მიზეზ-შედეგობრივი კავშირები.

ნაშრომის მიხედვით, საქართველოს ევროპული იდენტობის მატრიცა ეფუძნება ისტორიულ, პოლიტიკურ, ეკონომიკურ, სოციალურ და კულტურულ მახასიათებლებს, რომლის მიხედვით საქართველო ევროპული ცივილიზაციის ნაწილად არის მოაზრებული.

წარმოდგენილი კვლევა ქართველ და უცხოელ მეცნიერებს დაეხმარება უკეთ აღიქვან საქართველოს ევროპული იდენტობა, რაც სიახლე იქნება ქართული და ევროპული ისტორიოგრაფიისთვის.

**საკვანძო სიტყვები:** ევროპა; საქართველო; ევროპული იდენტობები; ქართული იდენტობები; ევროპული ცივილიზაცია; ქართულ-ევროპული იდენტობები; ქართული იდენტობების მარკერები.

### Introduction

Since the presented issue is only a compilation of our research, it will be difficult for us to analyze it fundamentally (we believe that in relation to the mentioned topic, considering its relevance and importance, separate deep and thorough studies should be conducted), therefore a brief overview of the issue should be enough. Thus, the markers of European identity will be discussed only in terms of the compatibility of European identity to the Georgian one. Besides, a short introduction will be made on the genesis and markers of the European identity in order to make it easier for us to determine the cause-and-effect relationship of the European identity of Georgia.

First of all, when discussing the above-mentioned issue, the characteristics of civilizational and then national identities will be taken into account, because civilizational identity is more extensive and versatile than national identity. Nevertheless, civilizational and national identities are united by the markers such as common origin, belonging to a certain group, political, economic, social, cultural or other factors. This fact enables to determine the matrix of these two identities, and then to compare them with each other and define the similarity or difference.

Since our goal is to reveal and determine the characteristics of the European identity of Georgia, we will try to reveal the similarities of the Georgian-European identities with this approach.

The condition is eased by the fact that European countries, together with the common European civilizational identity, also have their own national identities (for example: German, French, Spanish, etc.).

Based on all of the above, it is quite logical to consider all those people who meet the mentioned characteristics under the European civilizational identity.

### Methods:

In this work is used various research methods: Historical, logical, system-structural, analytic, and synthetic methods were applied. The retrospective method was used, through the historical background of the research topic was studied.

Working on the article, applied and approved historical-comparative, complex-intensive, and descriptive methods in historical science used. The most important of them is the historical-

comparative method. The article also considered scientific research with sources and special scientific literature processing.

### Results

As the analysis of the research showed, the European identity matrix of Georgia was mainly based on all the markers that are based on the characteristics of European and Georgian identity, namely common ancestors, myths, geographical and cultural factors with its wide spectrum.

Based on the above, Georgian identity markers, compared to other civilizations, show more similarities with European ones. That is why the Georgian identity, which is independent and individual, at the same time, is closest to the European one in terms of civilization, and we can safely call it European.

### Discussion

#### Genesis of European identity

What concerns to the European identity, it originates from the ancient period (Meier Chr., 2012), from the Greco-Roman world, and is considered a synthesis of the civil idea of this world, Christianity, which is reflected in the consciousness of Europeans, according to the researchers.

Roman law and Christian faith also play an important role in the formation of European identity.

In addition to this, scientists consider the city factor, science and education issues vital in the formation of European identity as well.

As for the exact date of the genesis of the European identity, some scholars believe that it was Greece of the 7<sup>th</sup> century B.C.. (Patôcka , 1988, pp. 97-101) Another part of them reckons that Europe as a reality emerged in the XI-XIII centuries, when a broad wave of Christianity covered Europe. (Le Goff, 2005).

Thus, despite the different viewpoints, a large number of scientists believe that the foundations of European identity originated in the heart of ancient civilization and discusses identity mainly in a cultural context (Nadareishvili K, Cheishvili T., 2014), and here, role of ancient Greece is undoubtedly significant.

However, it should also be said that the researchers of the ancient period consider the identity of Europe from another point of view.

Greek identity with Homer, for example, is based on an imaginary common ancestor - a genealogy. With Herodotus, the cultural identity is mainly created by a political model, while with Isocrates, the confrontation between the Greeks and the barbarians is replaced by the confrontation between Europe and Asia (barbarians) and goes through the factor of civilization.

#### European Identity Markers of Georgia

##### Ethnic Marker

As for the origin of the Georgians, both scientific, mythological and religious versions are interesting in this regard.

The European (Humboldt, Kretchmer, Blumenbach) and Georgian scientists (Niko Mari, Akaki Urushadze, Rismag Gordeziani, Zviad Gamsakhurdia and others) of the 19<sup>th</sup> century believed that the Proto-Georgians were ethnically, linguistically and culturally related to the European aborigines - with pre-Indo-Europeans, pre-Aryans, pre-Celts (pre-Indo-European, pre-Aryan, pre-

Celtic), including Etruscans, Pelasgians and Proto-Basques. Ancient Greeks and Romans called these first inhabitants of Europe - Iberians. The latter European population that lived in the Iberian Peninsula, in the Mediterranean basin, in the Balkans, in modern Greece, in the Caucasus came from them. This is the area of the Proto-Iberian race flourishing, which had many branches (Anchabadze, 2015, p. 9).

In this regard, the researches of the famous Georgian scientist Rismag Gordeziani are worth noting. He points out: "...One very important factor nurtures the longing for a common European heritage in our country. Our country has participated in the ongoing processes in the Mediterranean basin since time immemorial. As it turns out, the Kartvelian tribes may have had genetic relations with the peoples of pre-Greek civilization (Pelasgians, Lelegs, Minoans, etc.), as well as with the ancient population of Italy - the Etruscans (Gordeziani R., Tonia N., 2007, p. 8).

As for the mythological version of the origin of Georgians, "it seems that the centuries-old history of Greek-Georgian relations originates from the Mycenaean era, which was reflected in the Greek myths about Prometheus and the Argonauts expedition. Ancient Colchis – the scene of the Argonautic myth, became one of the most important countries outside Greece. As for Medea, Aetees, Circe, Apsirtos and other Colchian mythological characters, they firmly occupied their place in Greek literature (Gordeziani R., Tonia N., 2007, p. 8).

According to Niko Mari, the Georgian tribe was a descendant of Noah's son, Japheth, and represented the indigenous population of Iberia in Europe, which later joined the Celts. As a result, they became Celt-Iberians and later united with the Goths, Germanic tribes, (Marr, 1923) which in itself attributes Georgia to Europe.

In addition to this, Zviad Gamsakhurdia points out the mythological origin of Georgians. He believed that the myth of Prometheus is the most important in this regard, both from the evolution of mankind and the ethnogenesis of Georgians the point of view of. Who is Prometheus? Prometheus is a representative of the humanity that must develop prophetic, intuitive thinking, and Epimetheus – the one who must develop judgmental, intellectual thinking. Whose son is Prometheus? He is the son of Iapetus (Gamsakhurdia , 1991, p. 197).

### **Geographical marker**

As for the area of geographical settlement of the Kartvelian tribes, it is believed that from ancient times Asia Minor, the island of Crete and a lot of areas of the Mediterranean Sea were the home of the pre-Hellenic-Pelasgian (proto-Georgian) population. The ancient Colchis (Georgian) tribes should have had a notable role in the so-called "Minoan population" of the Crete. According to ancient Greek and Roman authors, the Palasgians are considered to be related tribes to the Thessalians, the Trojans of Asia Minor, the inhabitants of the island of Lemnos, and the Colchis (Janashia , 1959). It was the people of this tribe who created large cultural centers in the territory of the former Asia and in Southern Europe (Urushadze, 1964, p. 121).

Zviad Gamsakhurdia is of a same opinion and concludes that Troy is the same Colchian world, since during the dispute between the Achaeans and the Trojans, the Trojans explain the abduction of Helen as a kind of revenge for their earlier abduction of Medea (Gamsakhurdia , 1991, p. 191).

Thus, according to Zviad Gamsakhurdia, the Colchian, Pelasgian, Trojan, Minoan worlds are related worlds, or rather, they represent one world.

Regarding the resettlement of Georgians, Zviad Gamsakhurdia shares the opinion of Wilhelm Humboldt, who believed that the autochthonous population of Southern Europe: the Pyrenees, Italy, and the Mediterranean islands were Iberian, who were called Proto-Iberians, and the later European population was derived from them. In science, the term - Mediterranean race has also been adopted, a Mediterranean race that lived from the Pyrenees peninsula to the Mediterranean basin, the Balkans, modern Greece, the Caucasus and the modern territory of India, as well as in Asia Minor and Palestine. This is the spread area of the Proto-Iberian lineage, which had many branches (Gamsakhurdia , 1991, p. 193).

The ancient Greeks and Romans themselves, called the first inhabitants of Europe - Iberians.

According to Procopius of Caesarea, the river "Phasis" (Rioni) divides the land in two - the left side of the flowing water is Europe, and the right side is called Asia. The residential areas of the Laz (Georgian tribe) are located in the European part (Kaukhchishvili , 1934, p. 24).

Thus, the area of geographical settlement of Georgian tribes since ancient times is Asia Minor, the island of Crete and the Mediterranean and Black Sea areas. As for Western Georgia, more precisely – Colchis, historically neighboring Greece and Byzantium, and for centuries it was a kind of bridge and binding factor between Europe and Asia as well.

### **Cultural Marker**

A cultural marker represents a wide spectrum, including religion, language, written language, traditions, and so on.

Since religion is the most essential sign (Toynbee , pp. 86-88) of civilization and is the real basis and driving force (Huntington ) of its development, we must consider the adoption of Christianity by Georgians in this context, which was of great importance for the further development of the country, which resulted in the final civilizational separation of Georgia from the Asian world. It was a decisive stage in the history of the Georgian state and it finally defined the country's European identity. This decision was so important that despite the multiple conquests of Georgia by foreign enemies, the occasional interruption of relations with Europe, the country has preserved its identity and statehood to this day (Pazhava, 2020).

Even today, Georgians perceive themselves as part of a united Christendom, which was based on the civilization of common European or Christian Middle Ages (Javakhia, 2010, p. 113).

As for the similarity of the Georgian language with European languages, numerous interesting opinions exist about this issue.

The first scientist who tried to link the Georgian language with European languages (Greek, Latin...) was Lorenzo Hervás.

The German philosopher Leibniz also considered the Georgian language to be a language of European origin.

Although the factual material verified by Leibniz was not convincing enough to draw proper conclusions, the discussion about the Georgian language contained in the works of this great authority was undoubtedly of great importance in terms of showing interest in the problem of the Georgian language in the scientific world.

The beginning of a new period in the field of research on the relation of the Georgian and, in general, the Kartvelian languages is tied with the name of the famous French Kartvelologist - academician Marie Brosse (1802-1880).

Brose believed that the Georgian language is genetically related to the Indo-European languages. The conclusions of the mentioned studies are presented in his fundamental book "Georgian Grammar" (1834) (Brosse, 1834.).

One of the founders of linguistic science, the greatest German scientist, - Franz Bopp drew his interest to the issue of the genealogy of the Georgian language.

Bopp's interest in the problem of the origin of the Georgian language had a special significance in terms of drawing attention to this language in scientific circles. The international flagman of linguistic science read his report about the Georgian language at the Berlin Academy of Sciences first on December 11, 1842, and for the second time – in Berlin as well, on October 23, 1845 (Dzidziguri, 2021.).

In 1846, Bopp published a paper in the Memoirs of the Philosophical-Historical Department of the Berlin Academy of Sciences: "About Georgia from the viewpoint of language relations", and the same paper was published as a separate book in 1847 under the title: "Caucasian members of the Indo-European language family".

Bopp believed that in the declination of nouns, adjectives, stems and declinations of pronouns, in numerical nouns, as well as in conjugation of verbs - according to persons, numbers, tenses and dialects, the Georgian language is related to Indo-European languages (Sanskrit, etc.).

In modern scientific literature, the European one is considered one of the main theories of the origin of the Georgian alphabet, according to which the Georgian alphabet originated from the Greek. This hypothesis belongs to the German paleographer Victor Gardthausen. This theory is shared by Akaki Shanidze, Tamaz Gamkrelidze, Dimitri Bakradze, Korneli Kekelidze and others.

According to this theory, the phonetic meaning and sequence of letters and signs in Georgian is similar to Greek.

In Georgia, the theory of the origin of the Georgian alphabet from Greek was first proposed by Dimitri Bakradze. Korneli Kekelidze also shares this opinion. He reckons that "from the hypotheses that have been put forward in our country and abroad about the origin of the Georgian alphabet, the one that derives our alphabet from Greek is more acceptable."

Pavle Ingorokva considered the Georgian alphabet to be created on the basis of the archaic Greek alphabet. According to T. Gamkrelidze, the Georgian Asomtavruli alphabet comes from Greek and was created after the adoption of Christianity (Gamkrelidze, 2011.).

Thus, we can consider Georgian written language, like Greek and Latin in the framework of European civilization.

What concerns education, science, art and writing (implying literature as well), this sign of civilization has been noticed by the Georgian people since the early Middle Ages (Chikovani, 2005, გვ. 163).

The thought conveyed by the Georgian nobleman Fartazi conveyed in the work of Agathias Scholasticus in the middle of the VI century, should be considered as a fact of the cultural and political unity comprehension of Georgia with Byzantium (Europe). According to him, Georgians had many things in common with Byzantines, such as: "social laws, state structure and life", "unity of opinions", faith, "immaculateness of holy mysteries" and, in general, "native rules" (Javakhia, 2010, p. 113).

In the XI-XII centuries, there were already centers of science and education in Georgia (Gelati and Ikalto Academies). The oldest Georgian artistic work dates back to the V century. The creation of fiction has not stopped in Georgia, throughout history. In the 12<sup>th</sup> century, the masterpiece of

Georgian literature Shota Rustaveli's "The Knight in the Panther's Skin" was created. The work of the 10<sup>th</sup> century "The Life of Grigol Khandzteli" is not only an artistic work, but also carries a historical character.

The first Georgian book was printed in Rome in 1629. It was a Georgian-Italian dictionary compiled by Stephane Paolini with the help of Nikifore Irbakh (Nikoloz Cholokashvili), the ambassador of Teymuraz I. This dictionary has been published many times, one of them is still preserved in Vatican.

The second Georgian book, which was printed in the same year in the same printing house, was the Georgian alphabet with prayers (Karichashvili, 1929., გვ. 31-34). The missionary Mario Maggio published twice the "Grammar of the Georgian language" in 1643 and 1670 respectively, which was compiled in both "Nuskhuri" and "Mkhedruli" script.

The next Georgian book was printed in Rome in 1681. Mikheil Tamarashvili remembers it in the following way: "The Christian doctrine was handed down in symbols from Cardinal Bellarmine and translated from Italian language into Georgian Mkhedruli by Patri Bernardo Mariam of Naples - Capuchin, preacher and theologian." Bernardo Mariam from Naples was one of the missionaries, who was absolutely fluent in Georgian. The missionaries used to translate the books as well. Hugo Schuhart saw 14 Georgian manuscripts rewritten by Bernardo of Naples in the old Capuchin church in Torre del Greco (Italy). In 1741, the Christian Doctrine translated and prepared by Davit Tlukashvili was printed. He worked in the collegium of foreigners created by Pope Urban II in Rome. In the same year, another small Georgian book was printed under the title of Christian teachings.

In Europe, book printing in Georgian was of great importance. European missionaries were very interested in Georgian culture. (Karichashvili, 1929., გვ. 38-41)

Georgian historical writing is also rich. Philosophical science was also developing decently in Georgia (Ephrem Mtsire, Ioane Petritsi). Georgian fine art and engraving was of a high level. Georgians created excellent miniatures and relief sculptures. Georgian mosaic and fresco art were widely known. Georgian musical culture is especially noteworthy. Georgian people have many masterpieces in the field of songs (two-, three- and four-part choral songs). Georgian folk choreography has a centuries-old tradition. In the process of its development, theatrical Georgian dances were also created (Karichashvili, 1929., p. 33).

There was an interesting situation in the field of law as well. Georgians owned written state law. For example, we can name the legal codes of Bagrat Kurapatat, Beka-Agbugha and Vakhtang VI.

There was also accountability system in Georgia: every seven years, the royal court conducted the population accountability.

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